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AUTHOR Noggle, Vernon R.
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ABSTRACT

Maintaining that lack of action is one of the biggest errors school managers make, this author describes development of competency based education (CBE) programs as one example of how action can be taken by identifying a problem area and systematically approaching it. He defines CBE programs as those involving identification of basic skills, a student testing device, minimum performance levels, and promotion or graduation performance requirements. He advocates CBE for educating students for the world of the future, partly because it provides a foundation upon which training and retraining can rest. The author also holds that by developing a CBE program, a school district is announcing that it cannot teach everything and that it will concentrate on the most important curricular core. He then notes that CBE is only one pathway toward solving the problem of mass education and that, to solve this complex problem, we must dissect the task into manageable segments and deal with each component. The last quarter of the paper briefly describes the steps in starting a CBE program, including needs assessment, sharing the findings of needs assessment and gathering other opinions, evaluating other CBE programs, adapting the program to the district's own particular needs, and making sure that everyone is committed to the program. (Author/JM)

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DO SOMETHING, EVEN IF ITS WRONG!

An approach to better management and Planning in Public Schools through a systematic approach to improvement of basic skills:

by Vernon R. Noggle
Assistant Superintendent
Crawford Co. Schools

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(Unpublished)

PREFACE

In reviewing how management and decision making has traditionally occured in public education, especially at local levels, I have come to the conclusion that a major portion of the criticism directed at schools for mismanagement, whether it be in staff, program matters or finance, is largely a result of lack of managing rather than mis-managing.

We hesitate in the hope that whatever the problem, it will disappear, or be covered over by another, or people will tire of pointing it out to us, or we will retire before we really have to confront it. Unfortunately, if we wait long enough, all too often the cyclic nature of things reinforces that as an alternative to action possibilities.

In this paper, I hope to use the development of a CBE program as an example of how a problem area can be identified and systematically approached. The result of such action not only being improvement in the specifically identified problem area, but in overall management as well. Specifically, I hope to relate how the attitude of change, action, and assertive management overcome the risk of failure and often lead to secondary benefits which collectively weigh greater than the intended outcome.

I have chosen the topic lead-in of chapter three, "Do Something, Even If It's Wrong!" as the title of this paper as it expresses best that dynamic most needed in public schools today. Obviously it is tongue in cheek as I really don't mean to advocate doing something you know is wrong. It is meant to imply that often the lack of action is the biggest error and in times of crisis it is those who take the risk of action that usually succeed in making the greatest forward strides.

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Part I. CBE . . . An Overview:

Competency based education is a phrase used to describe a wide variety of educational programs that have some commonality. This commonality involves the following; an identification of what basic skills are, a testing device to identify student performance levels in those basic skills, the establishment of a minimum expectation level of student performance, and a policy on promotion or graduation in relation to student performance on the tests. Some programs involve only an exit testing phase, while others are truly a complete educational program involving planning, instruction, and remediation strategies throughout the K - 12 system.

At the present time, thirty seven states have some form of mandated statewide system of CBE in various phases of operation.(22)* The programs fit into three catagories. One, a testing device produced by state departments of education and given to all students in the state at a certain level, secondly, state developed general guidelines within which local school districts develop their own CBE program, and thirdly, locally developed programs without specific statewide guidelines.

The major emphasis of the "push" toward this kind of program occurred in the late 70's and resulted from several factors. The public perception and media coverage of public schools has been that they have not met the needs of students. It is believed that many students have graduated without minimum competence in reading, writing and mathematics and the public perception is that the high school diploma is more a certification of attendance and not a valid certification of competence.

At the same time, a consumer-minded public is dissatisfied with the return on education dollars and is demanding accountability. Reports of declining test scores have led to widespread fear that the basics have been deemphasized or deserted. Coupled with this external frustration is the tendency (not unrelated with the present popular conservative political and economic posture of "tightening the belt" and doing less and doing better) by school officials themselves to develop plans by which their schools "fit" the climate and withdraw from the progressive and expanding liberal philosophies of the sixties and early seventies.

At present the move toward CBE has lost the original surge of energy, but it has been replaced by a gradual and probably more durable and steady direction towards a re-emphasis of basic skill compentence in education.

In the State of Ohio, several bills over the last three years have been introduced to force Ohio's schools to conform to some kind of CBE standards. These attempts at a state mandated philosophy has been successfully repulsed by Ohio's educational community. The fact is however, that many individual school districts in Ohio have already begun developing some form of local CBE program. The State Board of Education has recently released its proposals for changes in the state minimum standards. (21) These proposals include the idea that each school identify, measure, and institute intervention strategies for the re-emphasis of skills in Math, Reading and Written Expression.

It is a pretty good bet that all schools in Ohio will, before long, have to deal with this issue and develop a program meeting such guidelines as are in the new proposed minimum standards. Keeping that in mind, I continue with some personal views based upon the literature and observations I have made over the last several years in relation to the subject of CBE.

*Note:

A complete overview of what is being done in every state is reported in this most recent national report.

"Analysis of State Minimum Competency Testing Programs,"
Final Report NIE-6-79-0033 Feb. 1980
Chris Pipho, Associate Director, Research & Information
Department, Education Commission of the States,
Denver, Colorado

PART II. THE FUTURE IS NOW!

It has been my understanding that many people view the various CBE movements of recent years as contradictory to what futurists tell us about future needs and the role of the school. I do not. It is my premise that re-emphasis on certain basics is altogether necessary if schools, or more importantly the products of schools, are to meet the challenges of the future and indeed shape the future.

The confusion arises because in my view the educational community will only react to what are commonly referred to as "sure bets." We have become so accustomed to dragging our feet and waiting until precedent is set that we blind ourselves to the creativity in trends. We settle only for building on an established need which has been around for some time and as such is not likely to disappear and leave us holding the bag. This many times results in building a program to meet a need that is already changing and soon to be greatly altered.

Exceptions of the above premise are sometimes forced upon us. For example, the Sputnik syndrome in the late fifties resulted in much apparent re-emphasis on math and science. Some may say it resulted in our forging ahead in space. True analysis will show that those very students in public schools who were affected by this concentration are only now getting into positions where they might have a bearing on the technology and policy of space exploration. It was the re-emphasis of the federal government and the money given to research and technological development commercially that caused advancement, not a swing in public school curriculum.

In any event, today we look for any conflict in trends as excuses to delay crucial decisions. We have allowed outside forces to control school direction for so long that we accept it as logical. It isn't. Consider this. "One of the finest examples of the value of precedent that Ihave ever seen," President James Burrill Angell, of the University of Michigan, used to say to his class in International Law, "is one of the paths which you fellows make across the grass of the campus. We take that as clear proof that a walk should be there, and set about building one."*

Some may believe from this that precedent is preferable to good planning. Not true. Educators who want to shape the future are the ones who must come to grips with which "future" is desirable. Those who don't needn't worry. Whatever comes will shape them. It is my contention that in order to shape the future, you have to decide what basic truths you want to maintain from the past and present. Judgements must be made as to what is a valuable thing and what is not.

I hear futurists say that humans will need to be retrained several times in their lives in the future. (12)**If so, we must provide a basic education to be a foundation or link upon which all this retraining can be done. I hear futurists say humans will not be dispensors of knowledge, but will have to make judgements on the use of knowledge; and will have to be synthesizors of learning programs, and will have to be experts in planning and evaluation. What basic skills can we teach now to allow our people to do these things down the road? I profess to you a sound belief that what is basic and universal now and upon which advanced and various areas of learning are now dependent, so will they be in the future with minimal variation. That we can't with great accuracy predict the future is precisely why we must project into it some solidity upon which a variety of experiences can comfortably rest.

No future ever came unannounced! No new era ever overcame us without men of vision and good sense warning of its partial presence and its inevitable arrival. Where we have failed to listen, believe, or act we have often paid the price. I believe the future is far less nebulous than the romantics would have us believe. The future in part is all around us . . we need but to look and recognize. How those present aspects of the future come together and synthesize into a recognizable era should not be left to chance.

Notes: * Taken from Jacob M. Braude's "Complete Speaker's and Toastmaster's Library" which is published in 8 volumes by Prentice Hall.

** Art Lewis, Futurist and Educator in a speech before the OSSA-OASCD Spring Conference in Columbus in 1981. Alvin Toffler described similar views in his new book The Third Wave and in a recent interview in AASA's "School Administrator".
Christopher Dede of the World Future Society has also related similar views on education and the future.

PART III. DO SOMETHING, EVEN IF IT'S WRONG!

Many of you are probably aware of an old axiom that says "There are three kinds of people in the world, those who lead, those who are led, and those that get in the way!" For a simple analysis of this you would probably conclude that all three kinds of people are necessary. Our quest for order in a complex society prohibits us from allowing everyone the right to do their own thing. Just as surely our fear of progressing too rapidly and making mistakes has created a place for the "checkers" of hasty action. A more careful analysis of leadership and progressive action, however, shows this axiom to be a gross oversimplification without much value. The facts are that often by taking no action we have made a conscious effort to conclude that inaction is the most progressive course to follow in this situation. Leaders often lead resistance movements and by so doing are deemed progressive. The implication that each of us can be neatly pigeon holed in one catagory or the other by our action or lack of it in any single instance is wrong. However, analysis of one's predominant behavior over a long period of time can result in a more accurate picture of one's disposition toward progressive leadership. This same analysis can apply toward institutions as well as individuals.

Most public institutions, with the possible exception of some profit motivated ones, have a natural disposition towards conservative, even reactionary postures. It's not all their fault. Self preservation is the primary motive, and we all can understand that. My basic premise is that schools can not really be blamed for inaction in most cases, especially if that action may seem to hasten their own destruction, at least in established design and structure. However, there comes a time when action becomes so necessary that the process of action itself can be redeeming regardless of the success of the specific action. Simply put, it's a time when "we should do something, even it it's wrong!"

I propose that we are now in such a time. I believe Toffler when he says we are engaged in a time when the second wave and the third wave of civilization are embroiled in an overlapping battle. We are in a period where an old order is fighting to survive and a new order is slowly but surely winning the fight. I believe Toffler describes that seemingly unrelated events of social violence and upheavel, economic chaos, and power struggles are all tied together by strands not inconsistant with historical data. I believe as he does that the struggle many are actively or inactively waging to preserve a dying world is a futile one. (25) I conclude that as a major public institution, schools need at this time to show movement, to experience alternative postures, and by so doing run the "chance" of contribution to the new and exciting future.

One of those alternative postures is to project some insight as to content relative to the future and do a more efficient job, using whatever means, in teaching all school children those content skills. Other ventures need to be made as well into values, as much of our future decisions will have to be made on that basis as they relate to life and gene engineering. Other postures will also need to be explored. Perhaps the easiest and simplest one has to to do with basic skills in content. It seems to me to be a reasonable place to start.

PART IV. WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

"Don McQuillen reports that the ultimate in youth alienation from elders occurred recently when a young man stalked out of a conference on aging, refusing to participate in the process." (2)

It seems to me that we have an awfully lot of people today refusing to participate in the process! Toffler begins his book, The Third Wave, with this sentence . . ."A new civilization is emerging in our lives, and blind men everywhere are trying to suppress it." (25)

This failure to act with thought and advanced planning and indeed the attempts to resist a new order by reactionary measures is probably motivated by the uncertainty of the future, and therefore the fear of failure. One of the great shortcomings our society has inflicted upon itself is this great pre-occupation with not failing. We have come to equate lack of 100% success with failure, and in so doing extinguish our motivation to try, to explore, to probe. Public schools see themselves under constant blame for many of societies problems and that results in a stagnation because we do not want to explain away to an already hostile public a program that did not reach the pinnacle of success. All of this leads us to weigh much too conservatively the expected outcomes against the risk of action.

In my humble opinion we must begin to view things in a third dimension. This view shows that the activity is not as important as the aura of energy that surrounds that activity. The habit of thought, the habits of cooperative action, the dialogue and communication that results from movement and synthesis is often far the superior reward. When we begin to visualize ourselves as shapers and innovators, we will gain the self respect and that of others that we crave. We cannot be defensive, passive beasts of burden and consent to carry the ills and woes of society on our shoulders forever.

My premise is simple. We often overlook the intangible and most meaningful of benefits by searching for tangible, overt and "salable" successes. Before we ask what's in it for us, we need to examine what real rewards and successes are, in light of the future of education. I see the need for educators to become a force as important and powerful as any we know of today in the shaping of the civilization of this world. To be perceived as leaders, we must indeed be leaders. To be builders in the scope of the human story, we must build for the advancement of people. Being a good caretaker of public funds, public property and public confidence is not enough. Caretaking is maintenance. We need to have an attitude of engineering. We need to create and shape.

Developing a program of CBE is not going to brand you as a great innovator or shaper of human destiny, but it's the action that is significant, the choice made, the energy expended. It's a good step. Dr. Neil Pohlmann stated in a recent graduate course at Bowling Green State University that, "It's important that we keep experimenting. When we cease to try new things and cease to act, in effect saying we're good enough, we're the best we can be, then we are no longer shaping our own future."*

Toffler has used the term "overchoice" when discussing curriculum. He says that we have not done a good job of selecting what should be taught from what could be taught. Instead, we have attempted to provide a little of everything, and it just hasn't been the curriculum we need that will fit children for life in the future. (24, 25) He described some basic assumptions made by a group of educational writers and researchers brought together by the Center for Adaptive Learning, Inc. in May of 1971. Their job was to prepare a future-oriented social studies curriculum. They assumed that whatever program they devised must have a curricular core of organized concepts, but remaining open to new facts and information from many sources. They assumed that there must be supplements to that core and reference sources. They assumed that an environment outside the school existed and must be used to supplement the instructional program of the school; and they assumed that this curriculum would only be a beginning and students would continually be subjected to the other sources of information concerning social studies. If we also believe in these assumptions as related to the entire curriculum, as I do, then our CBE program is going to provide part of that core and doesn't in any way impede the realization of the other assumptions.

The concept that schools must begin to realize that they can't do it all, that other aspects of society and the natural and cultural environment must play an active role in preparing students for the future is the most valuable lesson we can learn. If developing a CBE program is saying not only that this school district realizes its limitations and declares to society in general that it is going to work on that curricular "core", but others must play an active role as well in education, then we have gained valuable insight. What's in it for us then, is truly a more natural and realistic view of the school's role in the society of today and tomorrow.

* Dr. Neil Pohlmann: A quote from a discussion concerning the role of leaders in schools during the course EDAS 605, Internship, during Spring Quarter 1981 at Bowling Green State University.

PART V. "KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID!"

"For every complex problem, there is a simple solution. . and it's wrong!"

H. L. Mencken

When dealing with the complexities of the human existance and more singularily with the education of the human species, I believe there are no ultimate solutions. What works in one case most assuredly will not work in all. Indeed, what works in that case may not work at a different time with different content matter. What we in education are faced with is determining approximation and limitation. We narrow down our procedures until at best we have a group of them from which to choose that have succeeded in similar situations in the past. We have no singular agreed upon standard to which successful teaching has been reduced. Obviously, each "lump" of raw material feeding into our machine is unique, and to get near perfection in the end product, as our friends in industry do with inanimate substances, is impossible even when we attempt to create a different and unique process for each.

As I have suggested, we do not claim to provide a simple solution to the complex problem of mass education. What I do suggest is that we must isolate our task into units which are recognizable, and then develop a procedure (often a complex one) to help improve our efforts in that particular area. This is a simple and relevant approach.

In doing this, we have two major tasks. One is to create a program to advance the isolated area and the second is to coordinate that procedure with what we have done or will do in the other areas of education.

In the first case, options of how you separate or isolate problem areas are as varied as there are school districts. An example follows:

(1) Special Education (handicapped)
(2) Special Education (gifted)
(3) Basic Skills Education
(4) Transferable Skills Education
(5) Vocational Education
(6) Preparatory Education - (trades, services)
(7) Preparatory Education - (higher education)
(8) Specialty Education (arts)
(9) Physical, Health & Recreational Education

The important thing to keep in mind is that although you isolate each for treatment, you cannot ignore its place among or its relationship to the others for fear of upsetting the balance.

When we stand to assay a mountainous task ahead, we often look at the heighth and breadth of the problem and determine that it is too much for us. The "Simplicity is Strength" approach asks the question, "Do you need to scale that mountain at all 360° of its circumference covering it like a blanket, or are we searching for a single path to the summit with footholds and handholds that are small yet dependable? Then, are we looking for a perfectly straight path or can we zig and zag and use angles and directions most advantageous to our ultimate goal?

Finally, do we need to scale the entire mountain in order to gain from the experience? With each step we take we've gained a new place from which to view the next. How many difficult heights have been scaled by reaching the point where it's actually easier to proceed than to retreat? Yet I am aware that without sights fixed firmly on that target, the result could be aimless wandering.

My point is that we view the problems besetting us from the simplest angle. In order to run we must walk, and before that crawl. Inactivity begats itself. Competency Based Education is only one pathway toward improving the mass education problem. It's only one trail toward the summit, but as each new step is taken, we get that new view of the next and more importantly, a better view of the surrounding slopes and cliffs that must be scaled. We get an opportunity to see how the point from which we view forms a part of the whole and can be a starting point for the assault on other problems.

The negative view of this process would adhere to the spider's web idea that the more you creep forward the "stickier" the going gets, the more tangled the web, the less sure you become of retreat as a viable option and the more you struggle the more you are hopelessly bound to failure.

Basic to whether an effort toward CBE turns out to be a challenging assault on a mountain of problems or a strangulating experience in a web of little retreat is one's attitude initially.

If our vision sees positive opportunities for success, and if we are able to simplify our steps and make new choices and decisions, (in fact look forward to those challenges) as they come along, we are already in a strong position to do good things the size of which are limited only by the size of our effort.

In summary, don't be surprised when new problems and questions arise as you proceed in developing a program. Have the people in place to deal with them as they happen. Use the simplest approach in dealing with new challenges, and if it leads to another, deal with it also. I've found that new challenges have been handled most satisfactorily when we have that firm committment in the beginning from the professional staff and the private sector to see things through.

One simple way to deal with situations that come up is to put yourself in the student's place and ask what he would want, then put yourself in the place of the child's parent, then finally in the place of a stranger making a totally non-biased judgement, and ask the same question. If you can come up with a solution all three could agree to you've probably solved your problem. As this will not always be the case, you may want to satisfy the stranger, and if you can add either one of the other two to the agreement, it may prove to be a viable solution. At no time would I accept a solution favored by only one of the three, and I would be quite suspicious of any solution not at least partially endorsed by the stranger.

In relation to H.L. Mencken's quote that begins this segment, the idea is to dissect the complex problem and deal with each component simply and directly thus building a series of successes that eventually deal with the complex as a whole.

PART VI. TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTION - HOW TO START!

Probably the most important aspect of any program development is to have one person in a leadership role. Whether you are a supervisor, curriculum director, principal or superintendent, someone has to be the guiding force. I will assume that the reader is such a person and will be directing my remarks toward that person.

The chapter title may suggest that CBE programs have a right or wrong way of getting started. This is not true, but there is a basis of commonality for some. Several have been started on a statewide level because of lay pressure on legislators to do something about the poor quality of schools. Some have started from similar impetus on a local level. Some have begun from an honest professional effort of individual school districts to improve test scores, or curriculum, or instruction. Others have begun from attempts to make things harder for the pupils, as a reaction against "playtime schools" and a movement toward the old idea that less is good and good must be painful; "Back to Basics"! (I'm sometimes confused by not knowing whether they are talking about content basics or old time methodology.)

I would hope that any CBE program you start will be from one or more of the following motives. One, a professional look at curriculum, instruction, and outcomes and an attempt to be more efficient in educating children. Two, an attempt to rethink the true role of education in your locality as well as its total role in a changing society. Three, an attempt to analyze the needs of each child and provide an individual educational program for that child relative to the cultural, social and economic base of your locality. School districts who are moved to act by external pressures, be it local or statewide, grassroots or legislative, or resist acting despite such pressures are admitting a decided lack of foresight and sensitivity to their role in shaping society. (Actually those that move little are better off than those forced to provide cosmetic changes with little lasting effect.)

It is my contention that a CBE program can only work on the premise of creative ownership. Only when we create an idea, enlist help and service, develop it from the beginning and implement it ourselves with success, do we exhibit the kind of motivation, pride and ownership that will sustain effective change and progress. Parents, students, and teachers must own a piece of the "rock" also, or they will certainly kill it! Just as any structure capable of sustaining itself is built on a solid foundation of support, so must this significant change in the strategies of your school.

STEP ONE: The first step in any developmental program is to realistically establish the fact that a need exists. Review the schools testing program. What is given, when, and with what result. Examine the use of the test score data. How is this used to improve instruction? Is it used in any way for diagnosis and remediation of individual weaknesses? Determine how your graduates are percieved by the community, by the teachers, and by students themselves. Are students graduating without command of basic skills that people assume they have? If you are satisfied that present practices are efficient and that all that can be is already being done to remediate individual weakness, and your graduates are all competent in a variety of basic skills . . . you have just discovered a wonderful thing. Publicize it, shout it to the heavens, and see that it continues to be so. If your information reveals some deficiencies both in your school and in student performance, you have a basis to go on to Step Two.

STEP TWO: The second step is to share your findings with other school administrators, guidance counselors, teacher representatives and any others who have input into decisions concerning program at your school. The idea is to develop a commitment from these people that a need exists and some kind of action should be taken to fill these needs. Developing a CBE program may not be what these people want, so be it, but at least alternative courses of action should be freely discussed. Ideally, more research should be done at this point concerning possible solutions, but what you most need to have from this gathering is a commitment that something needs to be done.

STEP THREE: Do some homework. Evaluate and research the suggested alternatives that resulted from the meeting in Step Two. Look at various successful CBE programs and see what is being done, what local needs are being met by these programs, and what kind of preparation, cost, and personnel is needed to establish a comprehensive program.

From this point on, I am going to assume that Competency Based Education appears to be the best alternative to the needs of your district, the primary need being a more efficient emphasis on the teaching and learning of basic skills. It is important to point out at this point that obviously your school's total scope of needs vary from time to time, grade to grade, and most definitely differ from other school districts. Therefore, you must go into this project with the idea that a unique program must be developed just for your district. I am a firm believer in local creativity. I do not like the adoption of someone elses program in its entirety into another system. It would be rare indeed for two districts to be so alike that one could adopt another's plans and have them be successful.

The important thing to remember is that the process of development, the cooperation of your staff and community, the feeling of pride and ownership that develops from the process of building together is more important than the final product. It is that cooperative spirit of ownership and pride that will take your end product, implement it, evaluate it, make the necessary adjustments and see that it works as you intended. This is indispensable to the success of your project.

An analogy comes to mind here. That is the process used in past years of allocating state and federal funds for education through the letting of grants. In two forms of grants in the State of Ohio, Developmental and Adoption, the assumption is that projects can be successfully transferred to other districts nearly intact. When developing a program and applying for money, one of the primary stipulations the state requires is its facility for being used by other districts. Often these developmental programs then become Adoption programs. Adoption grants are given to school districts with the direct purpose of duplicating someone else's project in your district. The end result is sometimes good, often times not good. The thing that appears to happen oftentimes is that once the grant is received and the work of implementation carries on, much of the original enthusiasm waines and the project is often killed as far as its effectiveness is concerned before it can really be of total benefit. Here ownership is transferred; it is purchased. I believe hundreds of thousands of dollars a year are not used to their full potential in education because ownership has not developed through a creative and cooperative effort on the local level. I believe this is the biggest single argument for grants given to support locally developed projects to fill local needs. If this comes to pass, it will, in the author's opinion, be the biggest boost to education at the local level in the history of education. More dollars will reach their full potential in education than is presently possible under our present system.

The point is that you should strive to develop a CBE program using local human resources for ultimate benefits in the long run. Obviously this can be done much easier in states where there is no statewide mandatory test, and in states that support local development of such programs. Keep in mind, however, that this does not exclude much that can be done in states with mandatory programs.

The conclusion of the third step is to sketch out a sample CBE program for your district and present it to the original group as the most complete and logical approach to the situation. Your sketch need not be in any great detail and should be presented as simply an illustration of how a CBE program could meet the needs previously determined. Care must be exercised at this point to fully explain that any CBE program developed would be through

everyone's input and would not necessarily follow the plan as you are presenting. The need here is to give them something concrete to identify with so CBE is no longer an abstraction, but has taken some form. Your goal is to get them committed to the CBE idea and not necessarily to any definite set of standards at this time.

Your sample CBE program should relate to the following things:

1. Testing -
   How extensive should testing be? At what grade levels? Should it include lead-up or diagnostic testing in elementary and middle school? How can it fit with the testing program now being done? How will it differ and what will the results show?

2. Basic Skills -
   What are basic skills? Do we have a choice? Who will determine what we test, and will it remain constant over the years?

3. Special Education -
   What can we do with identified and placed students in special education programs? Should they be tested? Need we develop separate tests?

4. Options -
   Other than testing basic skills, are there any other things we can add on to fulfill a need of our district? How about the gifted and talented? How about curriculum choice or "overchoice" and the number of credits needed to graduate?

5. Jeopardy -
   Will test results be used to determine promotion and how about graduation? How many times should the tests be given and what about our students at the vocational school?

6. Remediation -
   What can we do to help correct student weaknesses and build on student strengths? How important is remediation, and what alternatives does this suggest? What will it cost, and what will it mean to the classroom teachers and to the students?

These are only a few of the questions that will need to be decided upon when you eventually develop a program. You must show that you as a leader are aware of the scope and breadth of a good CBE program, and you will be the one able to suggest the alternatives when each question is discussed and decided upon. What you really have here is a set of blocks. Which alternative you select for each question, and how you place it in a configuration with the other blocks will determine the final form of your program.

Finally, you want to get a commitment from your professional staff to work with you on a project of this kind, and a commitment of support, financial and otherwise from the board of education to pursue further this idea. If this commitment is not given at this time, you have no basis upon which to act, and no further action should be taken without it.

STEP FOUR: Once a commitment has been made by all concerned, and it is important to them that you proceed with the project, do so.

You must involve all parts of your school community in the planning. By volunteer, appointment, selection, whatever process . . . create a STEERING COMMITTEE. That committee should be equally staffed with parents and professional educators. Members should be aware that it will be a long term committee with exclusive powers to develop a program that may require several years to develop and implement. This committee will from this point on, set policy, project standards, a time line, developmental procedures, process and all other things relative to developing your local program.

PART VII. SUMMARY

In terms simply put, the competency based education movement has changed in intensity and direction since the first cries went up on its behalf in the late seventies, but it still promises in some form to be an influential element in present and future educational planning.

Those who sell it short as a viable approach to some of the shortcomings of public schools are short sighted. Those who present it as a saving panacea to all the ills of public education are equally so.

I guess what I'm really trying to say is that the time is right for management, planning, and movement towards better use of personnel, time, and resources to bring better efficiency to schools. We don't do that by being idle. We need energetic people exploring a variety of methods toward the desired results.

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